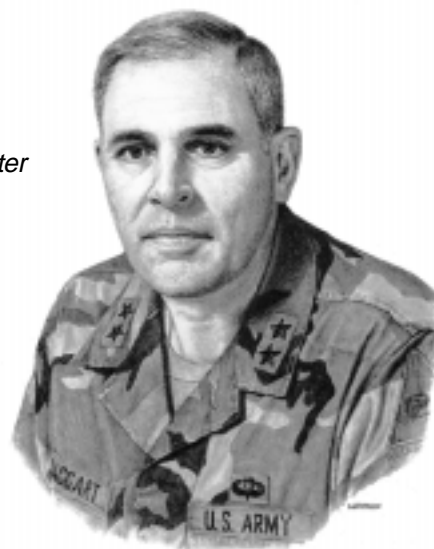


# COMMANDER'S HATCH

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## Plan For Success or Gird Against Defeat

The U.S. is moving rapidly towards a time when nothing will be as it once was. New organizations with leap-ahead technology that can be tailored and deployed quickly to meet a wide variety of contingencies are soon to be tested by the EXFOR at the NTC. The 4th Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division now have digital systems that provide a relevant, common view of the battlefield and, for the first time ever, the capability to take the initiative even before the enemy can move out of his assembly areas.

A modernization strategy is underway that will give the mounted force of the next century a Future Main Battle Tank (FMBT) that will have no competitors on the battlefield, Command and Control Vehicles (C2V) from which staffs can operate on the move, and Future Scout Vehicles loaded with sophisticated surveillance and reporting equipment that will allow our reconnaissance forces to confirm what advanced target acquisition systems have discovered.

Even our garrison operations will be different. Army support processes will be more efficient, with the focus on the customer, not on the process. Information will move through fiber optics and to multiple locations as we begin using distance-learning techniques. Training will be structured and tailored to meet the specific needs of each unit. Training programs will permit units to use virtual and constructive simulations to

achieve competence before advancing to live training. Change is upon us, and we must deal with it.

This is a particularly stressful time for the Army and the mounted force. There is much uncertainty, seemingly too many tasks to accomplish with not enough people and money, and there is the constant infusion of new technology with which we all must cope. While often infuriating and frustrating, the corporate Army seems to be focused on the future when the problems of today are consuming us. We all know that we must go through the present to get to the future, but there seems to be no clear path to follow.

Some of us have been there before. In the middle Sixties, when the Army priority was in Vietnam, those who served in Europe knew about running a tank battalion with twelve officers — one lieutenant colonel, two warrants, and nine lieutenants. Company commanders were second lieutenants, staff sergeants were platoon leaders, and if your company was lucky, you had a sergeant first class as a first sergeant.

In those days, the missions were the same as before the drawdown for Vietnam. Monthly alerts required units to clear their kasernes and be on the road to the border within two hours. A ninety percent operational readiness rate was still the standard, even though getting parts was a problem. In some units, tanks were put into administra-

tive storage because there weren't enough crewmen to man them. Each officer had twenty-five or thirty additional duties: trial and defense counsel, vector control officer, ammunition officer and pay officer (when we actually handed over cash to each soldier at pay day) and others. We all worked hard and spent long hours making up for the shortages in manpower, parts, and dollars. In the midst of these hard days, however, we all realized that things would get better.

We are at a similar crossroad today, with one possible exception: barring a large-scale war of some kind, end strength and budgets probably will not increase as the United States seeks ways to move more efficiently into the next century. We will have to find ways to accommodate the change brought on by new weapons, new technology, new organizations, and new missions, within existing manpower and budget constraints. We have no other alternative. We must accommodate change or become irrelevant. We will have to deal with the world as it is, not as we wish it to be.

It seems to me we have two choices in dealing with change. We can gird ourselves against defeat, or we can plan for victory. To gird against defeat is not to change. It is a wish for things to be other than they are. It is remembering

*Continued on Page 6*

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## Commander's Hatch (continued from Page 5)

how good times were in the past. It is embodied in that phrase, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Girding against defeat is to take the risks. It is reliance on hope as a method that, somehow, if we just stick to the ways that made us successful in the past, everything will work out for the future. Girding against defeat is admitting failure.

Planning for success, on the other hand, is to deal with the world as it is. No amount of wishing will get us a larger budget, more people, or fewer deployments. It is taking the long-range view, setting the conditions for future success today. It is building a strategic plan and carefully managing finances even beyond the POM years. It is making a plan, gaining consensus that the plan is about right, and then following the plan. It is making bold organizational and process changes to achieve efficiencies, if such measures are necessary. It is a realization that planning for success is a mindset that says, "If things can be done better, then why not?"

Planning for success also applies in the management of our careers. Officers who are not picked for resident CGSC are girding against defeat if they

don't enroll themselves in the correspondence course. Failure to achieve MEL 4 status is a sure-fire way to miss the next promotion. Failure to get branch-qualified is another quick route to missing the promotion list. Armor officers who homestead, or accept the same kind of jobs repetitively, or who take easy jobs, are girding against defeat. None of us can afford to stay in jobs we are comfortable with and still grow intellectually or experientially.

There is no question that our Armor Branch is the best in the business. They also work very hard to make sure each of you gets a fair shot at branch qualification and schools. However, Armor Branch does not decide the priority against which officers are assigned. They assign officers and NCOs based on where they can best meet the needs of the Army in a changing environment. Your job is to work to your full potential in whatever duty you are assigned.

There are a couple of other things you can do to help yourself. Get the photographs in your file updated. Keep in touch with Armor Branch. Let them know your address, phone number, and what you would prefer for your next

job, and tell them how it will enable your professional growth. The assignment officers at Armor Branch will do their best to match your desires with the needs of the Army. Spend a little time to truly evaluate your strengths and weaknesses so that you can help determine for yourself how you need to continue to grow professionally and intellectually. Seek employment in those jobs that will help you progress. Write letters to the commanders of units where you are about to be assigned, so they know you are coming and what you would like to do. Keep current on what is happening in the branch and in the Army at large. Get yourself enrolled in courses, especially CGSC if you haven't been selected to attend the resident course. Look for ways to contribute.

Finally, you need to know that your leaders are working to make the Army school and assignments systems match the demands that are being made on you and your families. And we will get it about right. In the meantime, try to look at change as a challenge, not as an impediment. These are precisely the times for Armor and Cavalry soldiers. Intellect, innovation, creativity, perseverance, and courage will win the day.